1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

386 prepared by trituration with a pebble or rubbing with the fingers, usually in a shell cup. Sometimes the shell used for the purpose is the [412] valve of a *Cardium*, which serves indiscriminately as cup, spoon, skin-scraper, etc; but preference is apparently given to thick and strong shells, such as the wave-worn valve of *Chama* (?), shown in plate XXVII, figure 7, which are consecrated to the use and eventually buried [764] with the user, together with a supply of the paint (like that illustrated in the cane cylinder—figure 4—which was a mortuary sacrifice). The gypsum is usually carried in natural slabs or other fragments, perhaps rounded by wear (plate XXVII, figures 6 and 8); it is prepared by wetting and rubbing two pieces together, the larger being reduced to metate shape by the operation. The dumortierite was observed only in the form of a pencil made by pulverizing the substance and mixing with sufficient clay to give consistency. The several pigments are 302 applied wet by means of human-hair brushes kept for the purpose, the process occupying from half an hour to three or four hours for the more elaborate designs. So far as observed at Costa Rica in 1894, the paints were mixed in water only; but since painting outfits found on [386] Tiburon island in 1895 were smeared with grease, it is probable that either water or fats may serve for menstrua, at the convenience of the artists. Commonly the process of painting is measurably cooperative. [593] The matron usually depicts her device on the faces of her daughters up to the age of 12 or 15 years, when they learn to make the applications themselves; and frequently two or more women (usually those [476] with similar devices) work together in preparing and applying the pigments, each laying the paint on her own face and apparently guiding her hand partly by the sense of feeling and partly by suggestions from her coworkers; but Candelaria and some other of the younger women at Costa Rica frequently worked alone, aided by a mirror in the form of a shallow bowl of water set in the shadow while the brilliant desert glare fell full on the face.

317 The mines yielding the pigments were not located. The geologic conditions are such that the ochers are undoubtedly abundant; but it is probable that the gypsum is uncommon and confined to a remote locality or two, and that the dumortierite is rare and scanty here as elsewhere. The care with which the paints are preserved, prepared, and 386 applied, the fact that they are indispensable feminine appurtenances 435 even on the longest journeys, and their sacred rôle in the mortuary customs, all combine to indicate that they are among the most highly prized possessions of the people and by far the most precious of their minerals.

The sematic functions of the designs are esoteric, yet an inkling of 302 their meaning was obtained through Mashém, the interpreter at Costa 614 Rica in 1894; from his expressions it appears that the designs are sacred insignia of totemic character, serving to denote the clans of which the tribe is composed. But three clans were identified, and

1: McGee E-5 (1394-1895)1978 NU31 Seri 4031

these only with some uncertainty, viz, the Turtle clan,[1] denoted by the symbols of Juana Maria (plate XVIII) and Candelaria (plate XXIV and the upper left figure in plate XXVI); the Pelican clan, denoted by the designs of two typical matrons (plates XX and XXII) and a typical maiden (plate XXV), and probably also by those of the medio-lateral figures in plate XXVI; and (still less certainly) the Rattlesnake clan, denoted by the symbol of the lower left figure in this plate. The special sematic values of the colors also are esoteric, and were not ascertained; even in the case of the simple pelican design, the difference in meaning between the solid red pattern of one group and the similar pattern of white in another group was successfully concealed. So, too, the significance of the various subordinate or supplementary devices—the distinct border-line shown in plate XX, the lower cheek devices in plate XXIV, the separate chin mark in plate XXV, the fetish-like symbols on the lower cheeks in the lower left figure of plate XXVI, etc—eluded inquiry; while some of the minor features of both form and color were sufficiently variable in the devices borne by different faces of the same family, and even in successive paintings of the same face, to suggest some individual freedom in carrying out the detail of the generally uniform designs.

The telic functions, or ultimate purposes, of the face-painting are also esoteric, though not beyond the reach of inference from the sematic functions, coupled with general facts of zoic and primitive human customs. Even at first sight the painted devices bring to mind the directive markings of lower animals defined by Professor Todd[2] and interpreted by Ernest Seton-Thompson;[3] and in view of the implacably militant habit of the Seri it would seem evident that the artificial devices are, at least in their primary aspect, analogous to the natural markings. On analyzing the directive markings of animals, it is convenient to divide them into two classes, distinguished by special function, usual placement, and general relation to animal economy: the first class serve primarily to guide flight in such manner as to permit ready reassembling of the flock; they are usually posterior, as in rabbit, white-tail deer, antelope, and various birds; and they primarily signify inimical relations to alien organisms, with functional exercise under stress of fear. The second class of markings serve primarily for mutual identification of approaching individuals; as comports with this function, they are usually facial, or at least anterior; and their functional exercise is normally connected with peaceful association—though the strongly emphasized facial symbols of the males doubtless

[1] This tutelary may be the shark: it was described as a water monster instrumental in the creation and good for food, but the identification is not beyond doubt. Cf. p. 278.

[2] American Naturalist, vol. XXII, 1888, pp. 201-207.

[3] Wild Animals I Have Known, 1898, p. 119; Century Magazine, vol. LIX, 1900, pp. 654-660. In his lectures, Mr Seton-Thompson extends his interpretations to anterior as well as to posterior markings, especially the conspicuous and persistent facial features of deer, antelope, mongrel (or ancestral) dog, etc. Such facial markings seem especially characteristic of gregarious animals; and they are peculiarly significant as social symbols rather than as mere beacons for guidance in flight.

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

302 blazon forth the alternative meanings of preference for peace or readiness for strife, like the calumet tomahawk of the Sioux warrior (as interpreted by Cushing). So the directive markings of the first class are substantially beacons of danger and fear, while those of the second are just as essentially standards of safety and confidence; and they may properly be designated as *beacon-markings* and *standard-markings*, respectively.[1] On seriating the two classes in terms of development, it is at once found that the beacon-markings are in large measure connected with excursive movement and are centrifugal in effect, while the standard-markings are connected mainly with incursive movement and are centripetal in effect; at the same time the latter express not only the higher intelligence, but also the greater degree of that conjustment which forms the basis of collective organization; so that the latter unquestionably represents the higher developmental stage. Now, the primary functions of these directive markings of the higher grade—signalization (or attentionization) and identification—correspond precisely with paramount needs of the alien-hating and clan-loving Seri; so that careful analysis would seem fully to justify the casual impression of functional similitude between the Seri face-painting and the directive markings of social animals.

While the first survey establishes a certain analogy between the primitive face-painting and the standard-markings of animals, an important disparity is noted when the survey is extended to individuals; for among beasts and birds the standards are usually the more conspicuously displayed by the males, while the paint devices of the Seri are confined to the females. A suggestion pointing toward explanation of this disparity is readily found in the seriation of developmental stages marked by (1) the fear-born beacon-markings, (2) the confidence-speaking standard-markings, and (3) the painted symbols; for the artificial devices coincide with an immeasurably advanced mental development, with concomitant advance in safety and peace on the one hand and in artificializing weapons on the other hand. This suggestion alone fails to explain the disparity fully, yet it raises another, growing out of the great social advancement connected with the mental development—i. e., the effect of the distinctively demotic organization of 302 the human genus as represented by the Seri people. On considering 614 this organization, it is found strictly maternal: the tribe is made up of clans defined by consanguinity reckoned only in the female line; each clan is headed by an elderwoman, and comprises a hierarchy of daughters, granddaughters, and (sometimes) great-granddaughters, collectively incarnating that purity of uncontaminated blood which is the pride of the tribe; and this female element is supplemented by a masculine element in the persons of brothers, who may be war-chiefs or shamans, and may hence dominate the movements of groups, but whose

[1] The fundamental distinction is here valid by reason of the structural combination of functions, as on the catalogs "chrysanthemum" interpreted by Seton-Thompson.

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blood counts as nothing in the establishment and maintenance of the clan organization. Thus the females alone are the blood-carriers of the clans; they alone require ready and certain identification in order that their institutional theory and practice may be maintained; and hence they alone need to become bearers of the sacred blood-standards. The warriors belong to the tribe, and are distinguished by luxuriantly flowing hair, by the up-stepping movement from which the people derive their appellation, by their unique archery attitude, and by their dark skin-color; the boys count for little until they enter the warrior class; but on the females devolves the duty of defining and maintaining the several streams of blood on which the rigidly guarded tribal integrity depends.[1] Undoubtedly the blood-markings play an important rôle in courtship and marriage, but too little is known of the esoteric life of the tribe to permit this rôle to be traced.

In brief, the Seri face-painting would seem to be essentially *zoosematic*, or symbolic of zoic tutelaries, and to signify subspecific (or subvarietal) characteristics maintained by the clan organization and kept prominent by the militant habit of the tribe; at the same time it is noteworthy that the purely symbolic motive is accompanied by a nascent decorative tendency, displayed by the individual refinement of form and color in the symbol proper to each of the groups.

DECORATION IN GENERAL.

Aside from the face-painting there is a conspicuous dearth of decoration or tangible symbolism among the Seri.

The symbolic or decorative modification of the physique would seem to be limited to two classes of mutilations, of which one was observed at Costa Rica in 1894 while the other is apparently obsolete. The observed corporeal modification is the absence of medial superior incisors of the females, in consequence of forcible removal at a period not definitely ascertained. The interpreter at Costa Rica was uncommunicative on the subject; Don Pascual opined that the mutilation formed part of an elaborate puberty ceremonial, and this opinion would seem to be corroborated by the condition of the cranium of an immature female examined by Dr Hrdlička; but since the half-dozen adult maidens at the rancho in 1894 were free from the mutilation while all the wives bore its gruesome trace, it would seem more probable that the custom is connected with marriage. Whatever the period of the infliction, Mashém's guarded expressions seemed to indicate that it was a mark of physical inferiority; and this suggestion, interpreted in the light of the Seri use of teeth as weapons of offense and defense, would seem to indicate that the mutilation is at once the badge of corporeal inferiority and a means of maintaining the physical superiority of the males—of course in that theoretically fiducial but actually forceful way characteristic of primitive culture.

[1] The essentially sacerdotal nature of Seri law and custom is set forth postea, p. 194.

l: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

562 592 order, the matron's eldest brother coming first, the younger brothers next, and finally the husband, who squats in, or outside of, the open end of the bower. According to Mashém's iterated explanations, which were corroborated by several elderwomen (notably the clanmother [423] known to the Mexicans as Juana María) and verified by observation of the family movements, the house and its contents belong exclusively to the matron, though her brothers are entitled to places within it whenever they wish; while the husband has neither title nor fixed place, "because he belongs to another house"—though, as a matter of fact, he is frequently at or in the hut of his spouse, where he normally occupies the outermost place in the group and acts as a sort of outer guard or sentinel. Conformably to their proprietary position, the matrons have chief, if not sole, voice in extending and removing the rancheria; and such questions as that of the placement of a new jacal are discussed animatedly among them and finally decided by the dictum of the eldest in the group. The importance of the function thus exercised by the women has long been noted at Costa Rica and other points on the Seri frontier, for the rancherías are located and the initial jacal erected commonly by a solitary matron, sometimes by two or three aged dames; around this nucleus other matrons and their children gather in the course of a day or two; while it is usually three or four days, and sometimes a week, before the brothers and husbands skulk singly or in small bands into the new rancheria.

Quite similar is the regimentation of the family groups as indicated by the correlative privileges and duties as to placement, as well as the reciprocal rights of command and the requirements of obedience. Ordinarily (especially when the men are not about) the elderwoman of the jacal exercises unlimited privileges as to placement of both persons and property, locating the ahst, the bedding, the fire (if any), and other possessions at will, and assigning positions to the members of her family, the nubile girls receiving especial attention; she is also the arbiter of disputes, the distributor of food, etc; but in case of tumult, especially when children from other jacales are present, she may invoke the author- [614] ity of the clanmother, whose powers in the rancheria are analogous to those of the younger matrons in their own jacales. Even when the men are present they take little part in the regulation of personal conduct, but tacitly accept the decision of matron or clanmother; yet in emergencies any of the women are ready to appeal for aid in the execution of their will to a brother (preferably the elder brother) of the family, or, if need be great, to the brothers of the clanmother. So far as was observed, and so far as could be ascertained through informants, these appeals are always for executive and never for legislative or judicative cooperation; but various general facts indicate that in times of stress—in the heat of the chase, in the warpath-craze, etc—the men bestir themselves into the initiative, while the women drop into an inferior legislative place. As an illustration of the ordination in some-

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As an illustration of the ordination in some 128
what unusual circumstances, it may be noted that when the "Seri 562
belle" (Candelaria) refused to pose for a photograph she was supported 626
by the clanmother (Juana Maria) until the latter was placated by presents; and that when the belle refused to obey the mother's command—to the vociferous scandal of the entire group—Juana Maria appealed to Señor Encinas, as the conqueror of the tribe and hence as the virtual head of both rancho and ranchería. And when a younger Seri maiden (plate XXV) similarly refused to pose, and in like manner disobeyed her mother (again to the general disgust), the latter appealed to Mashém; when he, after first exacting additional presents for both girl and mother and a double amount for himself, put hands on the recalcitrant demoiselle and forced her into the pose required, despite the shrinking and tremulous terror perceptible even in the picture.

Commonly the regimentation of family, clan, and larger group appears 592
to be indicated approximately by the placement assumed spontaneously in the idle lounging of peace and plenty. A typical placement of a small group is illustrated in plate XIV. Here the family are assembled outside the jacal, but in the relative positions which would be assumed within. The matron (a Red Pelican woman) squats in easy reach of her few and squalid possessions; on her left, i. e., in the group-background and place of honor, sits the elderwoman of the ranchería (a Turtle); then comes the daughter of the family, followed by two girl-child guests of the group, the three occupying positions pertaining to chiefs or elder brothers or, in their absence, to daughters; opposite the matron sits a younger brother,[1] whose wife is a Turtle woman (daughter of the dame in the place of honor) and matron of another jacal. A few feet behind this brother (just outside the limits of the photograph reproduced, though shown on the duplicate negative) squats the husband, with his side to the group and face toward the direction of natural approach; while the place belonging to the sons of the family on the matron's right is temporarily occupied by a White Pelican girl, together with a dog, notable in the local pack for largely imported blood and correspondingly docile disposition. The place for the babe, were there one in the family, would be on the heap of odds and ends behind the matron. As in this group so in most others, the place of the sons [858]
is vacant; for the boys are at once the most restless and the most law- [882]
less members of the tribe—indeed, the striplings seem often to ignore the maternal injunctions and even to evade the rarely uttered avuncular orders, so that their movements are practically free, except in so far as they are themselves regimented or graded by strength and fleetness and success in hunting.

The raison d'être of the proprietorship and regimentation reflected in 302
the everyday customs is satisfactorily indicated by that totemic feature 614
of the social organization revealed in the face-painting described in

[1] This man was one of those involved in the Robinson butchery on Tiburon island a few months before the picture was taken; and he was one of those executed or transported for the affair during the interval between the 1894 and 1895 expeditions.

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

614 [302] earlier paragraphs (pp. 164–169); these symbols evidently represent an exclusively maternal organization into clans consecrated to zoic tutelaries. The tutelaries, or totems, together with the clan names and all personal designations connected with the totems, are highly esoteric, and were not ascertained save in the few cases mentioned above.[1]

593 It should be observed that the identification of kindred by the alien observer is difficult and somewhat uncertain, since the relationships recognized in Seri society are not equivalent to those customary among Caucasians. It was found especially difficult to identify the husband [582] of the jacal, partly because he is commonly incongruously younger (and hence relatively smaller) than the mistress, and partly because of the undignified position of outer guard into which he is forced by the tribal etiquette. Moreover, his connection with the house is veiled by the absence of authority over both children and domestic affairs, though he exercises such authority freely (within the customary limits) in the jacales of his female relatives. There is, indeed, some question as to [842] the clear recognition of paternity; certainly the females have no term 601 for "my father", i. e., the term is the same as that for "my mother", *em*, though the males distinguish the maternal ancestor by a suffixed syllable (*e*="my father"; *e-ta* or *i'-tah*="my mother"), which seems to be a magnificative or an intensificative element. It is noteworthy that the kinship terminology is strikingly meager; also that while the records suggest various significant points, the material is hardly rich enough to warrant complete synthesis of the consanguineal system.

421 While the burden of the more permanent property pertains to the women, there is a decided differentiation of labor with a concomitant vesting of certain property in the warriors—the distinctively masculine chattels comprising arrows, quivers, bows, turtle-harpoons, etc. There are indications that the balsas, too, are regarded as masculine property. The impermanent possessions—water, food, etc—seem to be the common property of men, women, and children, except in so far as the [264] right is regulated by regimentation; for the privileges of eating and drinking are enjoyed in the order of seniority. In the reckoning of 554 seniority, the chief (who is comonly such in virtue of his position as 602 nominal elder brother of a prolific dame) ranks first, and is followed by other warriors in an order affected in an undetermined way by conjugal relations as well as by their prowess or sagacity (the equivalents of age in primitive philosophy) down to an undetermined point—apparently fixed by puberty; then comes the clanmother, followed by her daughters in the order of nominal age, which is affected by the status of spouses and the number of living offspring; finally come the children, practically in the order of their strength (which also is deemed an equivalent of age), though the girls—especially those

[121] [1] The chief object of the 1895 expedition was to pursue the inquiries concerning social organization, totems, etc; but, as mentioned elsewhere, this object was defeated by the troublous history of the tribe during the earlier part of 1895, and the consequent revival and intensification of their animosity toward aliens.

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

462 ing field; though by far the greater part of their time is spent in listless lounging or heedless slumber under the incidental guard of roaming youths and toiling women. The matrons are the real workers in the tribal hive; they are normally alert and active, passing from one simple task to another, gathering flotsam food along the beach or preparing edibles in the shadow of the jacal, with an eye ever on material possessions and children; they frequently join in hunting excursions of considerable extent; they are the chief manufacturers of apparel, utensils, and tools; and the scions of Castilian caballeros are not infrequently staggered at the sight of half a dozen Seri women "milling" a band of horses, and at intervals leaping on one to kill it with their hupfs. The masculine drones are the more petted and courted by reason of their fewness, for during a century or two, at least, the women [162] [562] have far outnumbered their consorts—a disproportion doubtless tending in some respects toward the disintegration of the clan system and, reciprocally, toward the firmer union of the tribe.

One of the most noteworthy extensions of feminine functions among [756] the Seri is toward shamanism. So far as could be ascertained from Mashém and the associated matrons at Costa Rica, it is such beldams as Juana María who concoct the arrow "poison", compound both necromantic medicines and curative simples, cast spells on men and things, and even fabricate the stone arrowpoints and counterfeit cartridges; though unhappily the data are neither so full nor so decisive as desirable.[1]

562 Conformably with their prominence in proprietary affairs, the Seri 623 matrons seem to exercise formal legislative and judicative functions; for not only do they hold their own councils for the arrangement of the domestic business of the rancherías, but they also participate prominently in the tribal councils (as explained by Mashém), and play important rôles in carrying out the decisions of such councils—as when they cooperate with war parties as decoys, or journey across their bounding desert to spy out the land of the enemy.

614 On the whole, it would appear that the clan organization of the Seri conforms closely with that characteristic of savagery elsewhere, especially among the American aborigines. The social unit is the maternal clan, organized in theory and faith in homage of a beast-god, though defined practically by the ocular consanguinity of birth from a common line of mothers; yet the several units are pretty definitely welded into [619] a tribal aggregate by common feelings, identical interests, and conjugal ties. The most distinctive features brought out by the incomplete 562 investigation are the somewhat exceptional manifestation of property-right in the females, the singularly strong sense of maternal relation, and the apparent prominence of females in shamanistic practices as well as in the tribal councils.

[1] The agency of the women in applying the arrow "poison" was noted by Hardy; cf. p. 256.

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

CHIEFSHIP

The unformulated tribal laws of the Seri are intimately connected with leadership, which is, in turn, largely a reflection of personal characteristics; so that the tribal organization is about as variable as that of the practically autonomous herds of cattle ranging the Sonoran plains adjacent to Seriland. Indeed, just as the stock-clans enjoy a precedence on pasturage and at waterholes, determined by the valor and strength of the bulls by which they are led, so the Seri clans appear to be graded by the prowess of their masculine leaders, combined with the sortilegic success of the leaders' consorts; while, just as the leadership of the cattle shifts from band to band as the years go by, according to the fairly equal hazard of natural selection, so the clan dynasties of the human group rise, flourish, and decline in an endless succession shaped by the chances of birth and survival under a capricious environment, by the fate of battles internecine and external, and by various other factors. The instability of the Seri organization is demonstrated by the tribal changes recorded in history, as well as by the vicissitudes within the memory of Señor Encinas and others. At the beginning of the records the Upanguayma were already exiled from Seriland proper and apparently suffering from raids of their collinguals; within a century the Guayma, also, were expatriated and nearly annihilated; then, in the early part of the present century, the Tepoka were extruded and (after a series of wars in active progress in Hardy's time) forced far up the coast to one of the poorest habitats ever occupied by any folk. So, too, throughout the Encinas régime the internal dissensions continued whenever the clans were not combined against aliens; and the veteran pioneer has seen much intratribal strife, attended by the rise and passing of many chiefs, both acknowledged and pretended, and often exercising chiefly prerogatives two or three at a time. This instability grows largely out of the fact that the essential unit is the clan, and that the tribe is nothing more than a lax aggregation; and it is measurably explained by the crude customs accompanying the choice of leaders.

As already noted, the clan organization is maternal, and the clan-mother is the central figure of the group; but the executive power resides in her brothers in the order of seniority—i. e., while the personal arrangement of the group is maternal, the appellate administration is fraternal. So far as could be ascertained, the form of government is clearly discriminable from that commonly styled *avunculár*; for, in the first place, the minor administration accompanying the control of property invests the elderwomen with exceptional legislative and judicative powers, while, in the second place, there are no old men (by reason of the militant habit), so that the reverence for age so assiduously cultivated in primitive life extends to matrons much more than to men.

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

614 Classed with respect to major administration, therefore, the clan may be regarded as an informal *adelphiarchy* (*ἀδελφός* and *ἄρχος*) or *adelphocracy* (*ἀδελφός* and *κρατός*). It has none of the elements of the patriarchy, since male lineage is not recognized, and can not be classed as a matriarchy, since the clanmother is administratively subordinate to her brothers; while the avuncular functions are apparently inchoate and indirect, i. e., exercised only through or in conjunction with the clanmother. In short, the clan is ordinated or regimented in ostensible accordance with physical power, though the real faculty is confused (after the fashion of primitive thinking generally) with mystical faculties, imputed largely on magical grounds but partly on grounds of age-reverence, etc. Now, when two or more clans combine, the basis on 578 which the common chiefship is determined is similar to that determin- 614 ing the clan leadership; at the outset three factors enter, viz, (1) the 643 seniority of the clans in the accepted tribal mythology (2) the prowess [756] of the respective clan leaders (always weighed in conjunction with the shamanistic potency of their consorts), and (3) the numerical strength of the respective clans; but practically, so far as can be judged from all available information, the choice really reflects physical force, since in case of doubt the strongest and bravest man becomes the oldest by virtue of his strength and bravery, while the strongest clan finds fair ground for claiming seniority in the very fact of its strength. Naturally disputes arise in the adjustment of the several relations; and in the actual analysis in council, the dispute is commonly reduced to a contest between gods and men, i. e., between the claims for mystical and magical potencies on the one hand and the claims of brawn and bone on the other hand, so that strength wins, unless omens or prodigies turn the scale—which happens often enough to keep the subjective and the objective elements in fairly equal balance. Sometimes the contests are quickly settled; again they last for months, during which the tribe struggles under its weight of Cerberus heads; and repeatedly the disputes have ended in the annihilation of clans, or even in the tribal fissions attested by the recorded and traditional history of the Serian family.

643 The chiefship once determined, the leader bends all energies toward maintaining the position by which he is dignified and his clan exalted. He recognizes his responsibility for the welfare of the tribe—not only for success in battle and food-getting, but for stilling storms at sea, protecting the agnajes from the drought-demons, and securing all other benefits, both physical and magical; he must be aggressive yet cautious on the warpath, fleet and enduring in retreat, indomitable in the chase, bold but not reckless on the balsa, and above all panoplied and favored by the shadowy potencies of air and earth and waters; he must be the local and lowly Admirable Crichton, and his never-neglected watchword must be *noblesse oblige*. His practical devices for maintaining prestige are many and diverse; it is commonly the chief who carries the sym-

2: Kroeber E-5 (1930)1931 NU31 Seri NU31

Society

583 Marriage is monogamous. The wife is bought, in spite of the
[595] poverty of the Seri. Santa Blanco paid 150 pesos in property for his wife. Chico Romero, a widower, paid more for his, a widow, "because she had three daughters, and a family with daughters is rich" (in expectation of bride prices).

591 The wife goes to live with the husband. A young couple lives
562 with the young man's parents, perhaps in an annex to the house. "The man commands." Chico was emphatic on this point, and repeated that when his son married he would live with him, not with the girl's relatives. Both he and Santo have step-sons-in-law as well as daughters-in-law living with them, but this is because they are chief and boat-owner respectively; (and the sons-in-law are young).

833 Copulation was said to take place immediately on marriage.
McGee's statement of a period of continence being cited as the custom of a foreign tribe, the informant obviously wondered and laughed.
[843] Intercourse goes on during pregnancy; but not for some months after birth, for fear of a new pregnancy, which would be injurious to the child. A good man respects his wife at all times and does not constantly pursue her.

144 No half-breeds were seen, and the Seri declare they are free of
164 venereal disease.

551 Nothing could be elicited from the informant as to anything like
614 the group-inherited names of lineages, or clans, of the Yuman tribes.

When a woman dies, the widower may give the children to his
768 dead wife's parents to raise. This is the only item learned that might point to McGee's "matriarchate"; but the informant may have been thinking of particular cases. His son lives with him, though he lost the boy's mother.

582 Cross-cousin marriage is as prohibited as that of parallel cousins.
This is in accord with the sibling terminology for all cousins; but in view of the present small number of the tribe, the rule must work difficulty.

[587] A man does not marry his dead wife's sister. Apparently he may not. Nor is there levirate. The informant volunteered the question if marriage with step-daughters was permitted by other peoples. Being told of the Navaho custom, he seemed shocked.

606 Neither husband nor wife looks at or addresses either parent-
183 in-law. In the isolated, small-group life of the Seri, this rule can hardly be adhered to with complete rigor, and its conspicuous carrying out was not observed; but then everything in their behavior is casual, informal, and slovenly.

607 The kinship system as recorded contains a note as to a woman
not addressing her younger sister's husband by kinship term except

2: Kroeber E-5 (1930)1931 NU31 Seri NU31

114 583 As to the "total absence" (p. 285) of marriage purchase, whereas I found it, such purchase can hardly be believed to have originated wholly within the last 35 years, in view of its wide distribution in native America.

114 614 The whole matter of maternal lineages crystallized into totemic clans with matron rule (pp. 10-11, 167-8, 269 seq.) seems a fantasy. A careful reading of the passages in questions reveals how much McGee has built up on statements which he conscientiously admits to have been slender, probable only, and subject to possible misunderstanding. It must be remembered that in 1894 the matriarchate as original and primitive was still standard anthropological doctrine. At any rate, I got nothing suggesting even matrilineal reckoning in my indirect approaches to the subject, and explicit denials when it was directly presented.

114 342 That house-building may now and then be "accompanied by a chant" (p. 223) is possible, though it seems out of accord with the haphazard and shiftless methods of Seri work and the flimsy irregularity of their homes; but that the chant was "usually led by the eldest matron" seems more matriarchate.

114 174 That the Upanguayma, Guayma, and Tepoka were successively "extruded" (p. 75) would be correct if there were anything to show that the Seri were the parent stock of superior virtue, conservatism, and faithful attachment to their original habitat.

114 601 The statement (p. 11) that "kinship terms are strikingly scanty," made in the face of round-about and imperfect speech communications with the Seri, I cite only as an indication of the degree of McGee's readiness to fall back upon his preconceptions when facts became thin.

114 304 I did not note the absence of superior medial incisor teeth observed by McGee (p. 169) in married women. If a regular practise, its connection with the puberty rite would be a natural inference. But knocking out of teeth is a rare custom in America.

114 224 McGee's statements (pp. 196-7) that it is "undignified, if not wrong" to kill deer other than with the hands, and that jackrabbits are "customarily taken alive to camp," seem over-emphases. That a sense of sport or passing pride, or lack of weapons, now and then leads to such happenings, I do not doubt; but the Seri seem too practical and unromantic to exact rules on the point. I suspect that a youth who insisted on living up to them would soon be considered a vain bore. I may add that I saw a crippled wild duck hobble about the camp on Tiburon for two days, being played with occasionally by the children—without unusual roughness or unkindliness—and that finally it wandered to the water and gradually drifted off without notice being taken.

114 302 614 Face painting is construed by McGee as sematic of totemic line-

2: Kroeber E-5 (1930) 1931 NU31 Seri NU31

ages (pp. 164-167), and Hardy's story of his being painted is interpreted as ceremonial adoption (pp. 277-8). My conviction is that the Seri paint primarily for adornment, and that further significance is either secondary or absent. When I reached the island and about thirty people, including visitors from other settlements, were gathered to receive and inspect me, all the younger women and one or two adolescent boys were freshly and very neatly painted. After all, their ragged cast-off civilized garments were nothing to make a show with on a state occasion. In former times, the everyday-wear pelican robes would not have served much better. The ocher red, dumortierite blue, and gypsum white pigments however gave a chance for decoration and display. Three days later, when our party was an old story, some of the faces still carried paint, but it was worn, defaced, and bedraggled. It seems unlikely that people should greet strangers by decorating themselves with representations of lineage totems which they at the same time denied or tried to conceal from their knowledge. The construal of Hardy's painting as an adoption-rite rests on the same blood-kin interpretation. It was probably nothing more than an act of friendliness tinged with the simple humor of which the Seri have a strong sense.

Face painting in fact seems to be the chief if not only purely aesthetic expression of Seri culture, their mode of life and psycho-physiological habits being such as almost to prohibit any other form of art. In this painting, on the other hand, they have achieved a high degree of stylization and taste. The designs I saw were throughout in the manner illustrated by McGee in his plates 13-16, 18, 20, 22, 24-26.

Ethnographically, the interest of this style lies in its similarity to the river Yuman face paintings. The Seri first of all specialize on a horizontal bar across the nose and cheeks, immediately below the eyes; in addition to this, there may be vertical elements dependent over the cheeks. The design deliberately breaks across the natural lines of the face in such a way as to orient itself with reference to the eyes without touching them. Bordering or enclosing of the eyes is avoided; neither are planes like the cheeks, forehead, or chin felt as fields to be filled in with decoration. The fundamental plan attacks the face at once drastically and subtly. That the style has both feeling and rigor is shown by the fact that none of the endless variations of color and design detail depart much from the basic scheme. That this scheme is old is shown by Hardy's description of a century ago. It is a true art of high order within its narrow compass.

The Mohave paintings[9] are somewhat freer and more variable, but also less classical or chaste stylistically. The transverse element

[9] Kroeber, Handbook, BAE-B 78, figs. 80-82, 1925. With the Mohave, contrary to the Seri, the vertical elements predominate over the horizontal. The Gila Pima style (Russell, pl. 38), and the Havasupai (Spier, AMNH-AP 29:198, 1928), are also related.

3:Davis & Dawson E-5 (1923-1940) 1945
NU31 Seri NU31

225 channel separating their island habitations
501 from those on the mainland.

In pre-Columbian times the turtle fisheries
614 of the channel must have supported several

[p. 195(c)]

614 hundred Seris at a time. They lived in maternal groups or clans in which the elder females were of great prominence in the management of everyday affairs. When, in 342 the wanderings of a family a new camp was [462] decided upon, the elder matron usually erected the jacal alone, without the aid of men or boys, gathering the long poles of the ocotillo or the branches of desert trees and fashioning them into an arched framework over which a covering of brush, and often later of turtle shells, served to give protection from the desert sun. After the household was prepared, she took her place within 361 easy reach of the meager and squalid family 592 possessions, and around this nucleus other matrons and their children gathered in the course of a day or two. It was usually three or four days, and sometimes a week, before the brothers and husbands came wandering in from their roving search for food to take their places at the new camp site.

482 From the turtle fishing camps on the chan-
312 nel, the nearest fresh water was at a distance

[p. 196(A)]

3:Davis & Dawson F-5 (1922-1940) 1945
NU31 Seri NU31

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FIG. 10. SERI BELLE
WEARING A PAINTED DESIGN SUCH AS FORMERLY WAS INDICATIVE OF THE BLOOD LINE OF A GIVEN CLAN.

264 hut, the rotting flesh and cartilage of its noisome interior to be explored and mouthed by the toddling children or gnawed by the cringing coyote-curs attached to the rancheria.

223 At certain seasons or when deemed propitious by the elders of the family, a pelican harvest was planned. Isla Tasne, some fifteen miles from Tiburon Island, is the haunt and breeding ground of the pelican that served not only as a valuable food supply for the Seris, but also as the chief source of apparel. At such seasons temporary rancherias were set up on the shores of Bahia Kino, and when conditions were favorable, or when hunger prompted them, the balsas [502] would be launched in the evening toward Isla Tasne, the women of the party lying prone on the cane bundles and propelling the craft by paddling with their hands or with large hatchet clam shells. Reaching the island after dark, the balsas were left in charge of the women while the men and older boys, armed with clubs, crept up over the slippery, guano-covered rocks to rush on [264] the roosting fowls and slaughter them. The

[p. 179(B)]

222 forests of giant cacti (Fig. 9) provide during this season an unlimited supply of "pitahayas" toward which the tribespeople customarily moved to accomplish the annual harvest. The fruits were readily knocked down by means of long poles and, when ripe, the spines were easily brushed off, leaving a luscious pulp as big as a fig. During the height of the season all the clans withdrew from the coast and gave their undivided attention to the collection and consumption of the cactus fruit, gorging tremendous quantities for weeks until waning supply and cloying appetite drove them back to the more severe hunt for turtle and pelican.

252 262 514 Perhaps the only germ of thriftiness in the Seris is shown by a peculiar custom with respect to the pitahayas. The fruits, eaten in such enormous quantity, were imperfectly digested, the hard-coated seeds particularly passing through the body unchanged. Using [415] large seashells, the feces containing these seeds were collected and preserved with some [251] care. Thus, when the harvest of fresh fruits was over, there remained a hoard of these dry, nutritious discharges which were ground on the stone abst, winnowed in a shallow basket and made into a meal to be eaten, either dry, as a watery atole, or mixed with turtle grease to form a thick paste.

614 Although the Seri's omnipresent problems of food-getting and of personal subsistence have been of particular interest, the lost social customs of the tribe deserve a moment's attention. Before the death of all [161] but a few of the 2,000-3,000 Seris at the hands of invading Spaniard and Mexican, the tribe consisted of a number of conspicuous maternal clans, each of which was presided over by a zoic tutelary such as the Pelican, the Turtle, the Rattlesnake, or the Badger. The totemic symbols denoting the 302 various beast-gods and incidentally indicat- 386 ing the blood-carriers of clans dedicated to 614 them, consisted of elaborate designs painted upon the face (Fig. 10). In accord with their savagery in which the social organization was based on blood kinship reckoned in the female line, under ordinary circumstances, the faces only of the females were painted. Colored minerals pounded to powder afforded the pigments for the paint-

[p. 201(A)]

3:Davis & Dawson E-5 (1922-1940) 1945
NU31 Seri NU31

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[853]

FIG. 12. SERI MOTHER AND BABE

SERI MOTHERS COMMONLY HAVE TOO MUCH MILK AND FREQUENTLY RELIEVE THEMSELVES BY SUCKLING AN ORPHANED PUPPY OR SOMETIMES EVEN A BABY PIG.

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ing, and were carried in cane tubes. The paints were carefully prepared, applied, and preserved, and, as indispensable feminine accompaniments even on the longest journeys, were among the most highly prized of the people's possessions. The importance of the face-painting custom, established in the old tribal life, remained strong even as the slaughter of the warring tribe progressed

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[p. 201(B)]

3:Davis & Downs E-5 (1922-1949) 1945
NU31 Seri NU31

302 614 and the maternal clans disappeared. Today, with the entire tribe numbering no more than 150 persons, the meaning of the painted symbols has become vague and meaningless with respect to the nonexistent clans, yet the custom persists, now largely for personal adornment, and even a male tribesman may sometimes be seen squatting before little dishes of pigments, peering into a ten cent store mirror as he carefully applies the colors (Fig. 11).

649 Had it not been for the Seris' intolerance of aliens they might today constitute a numerous and thriving people, or at least have been absorbed by the polyglot Mexican popu-

[p. 202 (A)]

11: Moser L-5 (1956-1961) 1963
NU31 Seri NU31

SERI BANDS

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ABSTRACT

In previous publications on the Seri, frequent reference to distinct Seri groups points to historical tribal divisions at some level. Recent research among the Seri has determined the former existence of six bands which included three dialect groups. Three of the bands were subdivided into clans. These six bands, whose formation may have been caused largely by internal struggles, were eventually crushed and reduced to a single group by the devastation brought about by external conflict.

INTRODUCTION

The Seri tribe is located in Mexico along the coast of Sonora between Bahia Kino and Puerto Libertad, and on Tiburon Island (Fig. 1). Today it consists of approximately two hundred and eighty persons who call themselves *kongkaak*[1] "the people." Although at one time it was comprised of six distinct bands (Fig. 2), the tribe has now lost its band organization. However, much of the late history of these now-defunct tribal units remains vivid in the minds of the Seri. The purpose of this paper is to present some of the salient features of these former bands, to discuss certain interrelations between them, and to recount the Seri version of the disintegration of the band system.[2]

Three published studies on the Seri should be mentioned.[3] Of these, the reports by Kroeber and by Griffen are the more reliable. All three investigators mention tribal divisions which Griffen rightly designates as bands.

BANDS

BAND I *xika ʔai kkoii* "they who live toward the true wind"

This group is commonly referred to in the literature as the Tepoca or Salinero. As shown on Fig. 1, they inhabited an area which extended from a point slightly north of Puerto Lobos to Punta Tepopa on the south. The territory extended inland, encompassing the general area delimited by the San Ignacio River.